

religious freedom, there is more economic freedom, more women's empowerment, more political stability, more freedom of speech, and less terrorism.

More than ever before, vigorous U.S. leadership and diplomacy are needed to address religious freedom violations globally. It is clear that our national security will depend on the protection and advancement of this fundamental freedom.

The Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act will upgrade the tools and used by the Administration to improve U.S. religious freedom diplomacy efforts globally; better trained and equipped diplomats to counter extremism; address anti-Semitism and religious persecution, and mitigate sectarian conflict.

The bill does this by:

Requiring that the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom report directly to the Secretary of State.

Elevating the position of the Ambassador within the Federal Government: Gives the Ambassador responsibilities to coordinate religious freedom policy throughout the government; develop training curriculum for all Foreign Service officers; and administer grants to promote religious freedom policy globally.

Requiring training in international religious freedom for all Foreign Service Officers: Requires development of curriculum and training for all incoming Foreign Service Officers and for Deputy Chiefs of Mission and Ambassadors going out to new posts. The curriculum used by the State Department will be made available to the U.S. Military and other relevant government agencies.

Creating an "Entity of Particular Concern" Designation for Non-State Actors: Gives the Secretary of State authority to designate as "entities of particular concern" in recognition of the fact that in the 21st century some of the most egregious religious freedom violations are committed by non-state actors.

Requiring more frequent Presidential actions to counter severe religious freedom violations globally: Requires annual Country of Particular Concern (CPC) designations. Limits the number of sanctions waivers (except in cases of the national interest) and requires more frequent reporting on countries where sanction waivers are used.

Creating a comprehensive Religious Prisoner's List: Lists of religious prisoners would be made available upon request from Members of Congress.

Increasing congressional oversight of State Department actions against individual religious freedom violators through the creation of a "Designated Persons List." The list will include individuals who have been denied a visa or sanctioned because of their involvement in severe violations of religious freedom. Congress will receive frequent and regular updates on the list.

Requiring the State Department to create a "Special Watch List" of countries that tolerate severe violations of religious freedom but which may fail to meet the CPC threshold.

Sets Congressional Expectations for Staffing of the IRF Office and Expansion of Religious Freedom Program Grants: Requires "appropriate staff" for the IRF office and seeks office staffing at FY 16 levels. Urges the State Department to request "sufficient funding for vigorous promotion" of international religious freedom policy.

The bill is named after former Congressman Frank Wolf, a tireless champion for the rights

of the poor and the persecuted globally. 18 years ago, he had the foresight to make advancing the right to religious freedom a high U.S. foreign policy priority. It is largely because of his efforts that religious freedom is taken seriously as a foreign policy issue. I had the distinct honor and pleasure of working with him for over thirty years. This bill is a fitting tribute to his work and service to our great nation.

I want to thank Rep. ANNA ESHOO for her partnership on this legislation and her advocacy on behalf of religious minorities in the Middle East and the cause of all those oppressed for the beliefs they hold.

I also want to thank Senator MARCO RUBIO for his commitment to the cause of human rights and international religious freedom and for his assistance in getting this bill passed in the Senate.

As with many pieces of bipartisan legislation, this bill would not have gotten this far without the assistance of many individuals and groups invested in its passage. I want to thank Senators BOB CORKER, and BEN CARDIN, for assisting with the bill's amendment and passage on the Senate side. Congressman ED ROYCE and ELIOT ENGEL and their staff for helping to move this bill on a bipartisan basis through the House. Also, I want to recognize the contribution David Saperstein, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, who's worked to strengthen the bill and assure its passage. Finally, I want to recognize and thank the many staff members, in the House and Senate, who have worked hard for this bill's passage over the past two years including, Scott Flipse, Elyse Anderson, Mary Noonan, Hannah Murphy, Caleb McCarry, Jaime Fly, Doug Anderson, Piero Tozzi, Sajit Gandhi, and Janice Kaguyutan.

International religious freedom is not a partisan or party issue. The freedom to practice a religion without persecution is a precious right for everyone, of whatever race, sex, status, or location on earth. This human right is enshrined in our own founding documents, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is a bedrock principle of open and democratic societies for centuries.

We Americans understand the importance of religious liberty. It is the First Freedom on which our nation was founded. We should be united in defending it, standing up for those who suffer grievously for its absence, and for the noble and essential cause of protecting our own country. I urge passage of this bill without objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the original request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to submit statements or extraneous materials for the RECORD on the Senate amendment to H.R. 1150.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

UNITED STATES-CARIBBEAN STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT ACT OF 2016

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 4939) to increase engagement with the governments of the Caribbean region, the Caribbean diaspora community in the United States, and the private sector and civil society in both the United States and the Caribbean, and for other purposes, with the Senate amendment thereto, and concur in the Senate amendment.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the Senate amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States to increase engagement with the governments of the Caribbean region and with civil society, including the private sector, in both the United States and the Caribbean, in a concerted effort to—

- (1) enhance diplomatic relations between the United States and the Caribbean region;*
- (2) increase economic cooperation between the United States and the Caribbean region;*
- (3) support regional economic, political, and security integration efforts in the Caribbean region;*
- (4) encourage enduring economic development and increased regional economic diversification and global competitiveness;*
- (5) reduce levels of crime and violence, curb the trafficking of illicit drugs, strengthen the rule of law, and improve citizen security;*
- (6) improve energy security by increasing access to diverse, reliable, and affordable power;*
- (7) advance cooperation on democracy and human rights at multilateral fora;*
- (8) continue support for public health advances and cooperation on health concerns and threats to the Caribbean region; and*
- (9) expand Internet access throughout the region, especially to countries lacking the appropriate infrastructure.*

SEC. 3. STRATEGY.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a multi-year strategy for United States engagement to support the efforts of interested nations in the Caribbean region that—

- (1) identifies Department of State and USAID priorities, in coordination with other executive branch agencies, for United States policy towards the Caribbean region;*
- (2) outlines an approach to partner with governments of the Caribbean region to improve citizen security, reduce the trafficking of illicit drugs, strengthen the rule of law, and improve the effectiveness and longevity of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative;*
- (3) establishes a comprehensive, integrated, multi-year strategy to encourage efforts of the Caribbean region to implement regional and national strategies that improve energy security, by increasing access to all available sources of energy, including by taking advantage of the indigenous energy sources of the Caribbean and the ongoing energy revolution in the United States;*